

When Abortion Hits Home

Crisis pregnancy workers say they minister to nearly as many Christian women considering abortion as unbelievers.

When a young girl shows up at the First Life Center for Pregnancy in Orlando, Florida, the director, Sandy Epperson, depends on the Holy Spirit to give her just the right words to say. But when clients request a pregnancy test to make plans for an abortion, they are often shocked by the director's response.

"Why don't you just kill the baby you're holding in your arms?" asks Epperson, who has been running the center for nearly 13 years. She says there are times when she ministers to teenage girls and adult women out of tough love, but there are other times when the Lord will prompt her to use a more gentle, compassionate approach.

"The purpose of my remarks is to keep that unborn child alive and safe from abortion," Epperson explains, because many single mothers don't want another baby to feed and care for.

According to the National Right to Life Organization, more than 42 million babies have died since the legalization of abortion in 1973. Research also indicates that many women get pregnant a second time within six months of their first abortion. That was the case for one woman who did not want to be identified in this story.

"I wanted to have a second abortion because I was afraid of what other Christians would say about me," she said. The native New Yorker says she listened to the Holy Spirit and became a single parent instead of killing her child.

Helping women like this is what motivates the volunteers at First Life Center for Pregnancy. The center was established 16 years ago when founders Rick and Suzanne Fletcher heard their

pastor, Jim Henry of First Baptist Church of Orlando, preach a sermon about abortion. First Life also started a post-abortion program when Henry, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, learned that women in his 10,000-member congregation were struggling with the aftermath of abortion.

Today the center is run by an army of volunteers who attend Pentecostal, Methodist, nondenominational, Baptist and charismatic churches. Despite their religious affiliations, these volunteers are prepared to offer Jesus to people who don't know Him. The women they serve come from different racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds, ranging from Muslim women to those who are born again.

Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPC), where many women often are referred, have been around for years, and their visibility has saved the lives of countless unborn children. Many CPCs around the country are affiliated with churches, but many are not because some churches don't have the funds to support them, Epperson says.

Marcos Perez, a 22-year-old advertising director for the Christian men's magazine New Man, almost became a statistic when he tried to force his girlfriend to abort their son, Marc-Anthony.

"I was a sophomore attending college on a vocal scholarship. I was a respected youth leader and a pastor's kid," Perez told Charisma.

But when Perez found out that the love of his life, Kathy, was pregnant, everything came crashing in. He says he wanted her to abort the child, but the Holy Spirit's conviction was too strong for him to go through with his plans.

Today, the Perezes have been married four years and are delighted with both their sons, Marc-Anthony, 3 and Julian, 1. Marcos says that one of the greatest gifts that God gives to human beings is the freedom of choice, but with that freedom

comes responsibility.

“When we look into the eyes of our sons, we are eternally grateful that we chose life,” he says.